

Message Text

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ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 NEA-10 ISO-00 IO-13 OMB-01 CIAE-00
DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01
PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 /091 W
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R 300900Z DEC 76
FM AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6840
INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
AMEMBASSY DACCA
AMEMBASSY JAKARTA
AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR
AMEMBASSY MANILA
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
USLO PEKING
AMCONSUL HONG KONG
CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SINGAPORE 5828

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: ASEAN, SN, UR, PFOR
SUBJECT: VISIT OF SOVIET DEPUTY FOREIGN MINISTER FIRYUBIN TO
SINGAPORE

REF: A) KUALA LUMPUR 7465 B) KUALA LUMPUR 7485

SUMMARY: PRIME MINISTER LEE USED OPPORTUNITY PROVIDED
BY ONE DAY VISIT TO SINGAPORE OF SOVIET DEPUTY FOREIGN
MINISTER FIRYUBIN TO POLITELY LECTURE THE LATTER ON
SOVIET POLICY VIS-A-VIS ASEAN. OTHERWISE, THE VISIT WAS
WITHOUT SPECIAL SIGNIFICANCE. END SUMMARY.

1. MFA ASSISTANT DIRECTOR POLITICAL DIVISION KESAVAPANY
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ON DECEMBER 29 BRIEFED EMBOFF ON BRIEF "PRIVATE" VISIT
TO SINGAPORE OF SOVIET DEPUTY FOREIGN MINISTER N.P.
FIRYUBIN. (FIRYUBIN ARRIVED IN SINGAPORE LATE ON
DECEMBER 27 AND DEPARTED EARLY ON DECEMBER 29.) VISIT
WAS GIVEN PROMINENT COVERAGE IN GOVERNMENT-INFLUENCED
ENGLISH LANGUAGE PRESS WHICH STATED THAT FIRYUBIN

MET WITH PRIME MINISTER LEE AS WELL AS FOREIGN MINISTER RAJARATNAM AND OTHER SENIOR MFA OFFICIALS. FIRYUBIN WAS QUOTED BY THE STRAITS TIMES AS SAYING HE WAS "VERY SATISFIED" WITH HIS MEETING WITH RAJARATNAM.

2. ACCORDING TO KESAVAPANY, FIRYUBIN'S VISIT WAS NOTIFIED TO MFA ONLY ON CHRISTMAS EVE AND, PRESUMABLY, WAS JUST A TIME-KILLER BETWEEN VISITS TO DACCA AND KUALA LUMPUR WHERE "THE SOVIET UNION APPARENTLY HAS SERIOUS BILATERAL PROBLEMS". KESAVAPANY SAID THE GOS WAS QUITE PREPARED TO RECEIVE FIRYUBIN ON SHORT NOTICE; AFTER ALL, "RELATIONS BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES ARE AS GOOD AS CAN BE EXPECTED" AND THERE ARE NO "FESTERING PROBLEMS". KESAVAPANY, WHO SAT IN AS NOTE-TAKER ON FIRYUBIN'S CALL ON LEE, SAID THIS CONVERSATION LASTED 30 MINUTES WHILE OFFICE CALL ON RAJARTANAM TOOK 45 MINUTES. RAJA ALSO HOSTED DINNER FOR FIRYUBIN AND HIS SOVIET TRAVELLING COMPANIONS (REF B).

3. IN HIS CALL ON LEE, FIRYUBIN RAISED SUBJECT OF ASEAN, SAYING THAT USSR APPRECIATED ROLE GOS WAS PLAYING IN THWARTING THOSE (UNSPECIFIED) WHO WOULD TURN ORGANIZATION INTO A MILITARY PACT. LEE REPORTEDLY TOOK ADVANTAGE OF THIS OPENING TO ASK WHY, CONSIDERING ASEAN'S BENIGN NATURE, SOVIET UNION DID NOT GIVE ORGANIZATION ITS ENDORSEMENT. LEE NOTED THAT THE PRC HAS PROVIDED SUCH AN ENDORSEMENT AND THAT ONLY THE USSR AND THE US (SIC) AMONG THE MAJOR POWERS HAD NOT YET DONE SO. LEE ALSO OBSERVED THAT BELIGERENT ATTITUDE OF VIETNAM TOWARD ASEAN WAS A CAUSE FOR CONCERN. IF THE SOVIET UNION WAS

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INDEED FAVORABLY DISPOSED TOWARD ASEAN IT SHOULD MAKE ITS VIEW PUBLIC SINCE THIS WOULD HELP TO CURB THE SRV.

4. FIRYUBIN RESPONDED, RATHER LAMELY IT SEEMS, THAT SOVIETS MADE NO SECRET OF THEIR EXCELLENT BILATERAL RELATIONS WITH THE ASEAN COUNTRIES AND POINTED SPECIFICALLY TO THE RECENT ESTABLISHMENT OF SOVIET/PHILIPPINE DIPLOMATIC TIES. FIRYUBIN THEN RECOUNTED, APPARENTLY IN GLOWING TERMS, PROGRESS OF SOVIET ECONOMY, ESPECIALLY GRAIN HARVEST AND PETROLEUM PRODUCTION. IN THIS CONNECTION, LEE POINTED OUT THAT, CONSIDERING SIZE OF USSR ECONOMY AND ITS RECENT PROGRESS, SOVIET ECONOMIC PRESENCE IN SEA IS RATHER ANAEMIC. FINALLY FIRYUBIN OBSERVED THAT IT HAD BEEN A LONG TIME SINCE LEE HAD VISITED THE SOVIET UNION AND EXTENDED AN INVITATION WHICH REPORTEDLY WAS ACCEPTED, WITHOUT ANY MENTION OF POSSIBLE DATES.

5. KESAVAPANY WAS A LITTLE VAGUE ABOUT FIRYUBIN'S

SESSION WITH RAJARATNAM. HOWEVER, FIRYUBIN DID RAISE INDIAN OCEAN PEACE ZONE SAYING THAT THIS OBJECTIVE SHOULD BE ACHIEVED THROUGH "PEACEFUL RATHER THAN MILITARY MEANS". (COMMENT: SIGNIFICANCE, IF ANY, OF THIS COMMENT IS LOST ON US.) HE ALSO VOICED SATISFACTION THAT SINGAPORE AND THE SOVIET UNION SHARE IDENTICAL VIEWS CONCERNING FREE PASSAGE THROUGH INTERNATIONAL WATERS. ACCORDING TO KESAVAPANY, THERE WAS NO SUBSTANTIVE DISCUSSION OF BILATERAL ISSUES.

6. COMMENT: IT WOULD APPEAR THAT FIRYUBIN'S SINGAPORE SOJOURN SERVED NO MORE THAN A "SHOW THE FLAG" PURPOSE. HE WAS ACCORDED THE REQUISITE COURTESIES AND PUBLICITY, BUT NOTHING OF SUBSTANCE TRANSPIRED. FIRYUBIN MAY, HOWEVER, REGRET HAVING UNNECESSARILY EXPOSED HIMSELF TO LEE'S POINTED REQUEST FOR SOVIET ENDORSEMENT OF ASEAN.

7. ALTHOUGH LEE ALMOST CERTAINLY IS AWARE OF VARIOUS
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FAVORABLE PUBLIC REFERENCES TO ASEAN BY USG POLICY MAKERS, HE MAY HAVE CONSIDERED IT TACTICALLY USEFUL TO SUGGEST THAT US AS WELL AS USSR HAD NOT ENDORSED ASEAN. ALTERNATIVELY, LEE'S EQUATION OF THE US AND USSR POSITIONS MAY STEM FROM HIS RECOLLECTION OF THE STRONG PUBLIC SUPPORT FOR ASEAN EXPRESSED IN MAY BY PRC PRIME MINISTER HUA KUO-FENG DURING LEE'S PRESENCE IN PEKING.
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